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United States Army (Ret.)

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April 11, 2007

The Honorable Walter Jones
2333 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Jones,

We are writing to offer our congratulations and express our gratitude for your leadership in the House of Representatives to obtain passage of a resolution expressing support for our brave men and women in uniform and disagreement with the decision to escalate the war in Iraq with the deployment of almost 30,000 additional troops.

We fully support your opposing the President's escalation of the war with 21,500 combat soldiers and marines. This escalation is operationally shortsighted in failing to insist on essential political measures by the Iraqi government as a precondition, and the deployment of troops who lack the requisite training and equipment makes increased casualties more likely. The Congress has an obligation to challenge a President who seeks to endanger inadequately trained and ill-equipped troops in a "surge" that offers no way out of the impasse in Iraq.

We were disappointed to learn of the unjustified criticisms that have been directed at Members of Congress who supported this measure. One of these criticisms is based on the misguided belief that an open debate about U.S. policy in Iraq would somehow undermine or demoralize U.S. troops fighting there. As retired officers who have spent our careers in the U.S. military, let us assure you that members of our military understand and support the need for open and frank Congressional debate.

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Peter Pace (USMC) and Secretary of Defense Robert Gates put this concern to rest in their testimony before the House Armed Services Committee on February 7, 2007.

Responding to a question from Rep. John M. McHugh (R-NY), General Pace stated:

"There is no doubt in my mind that the dialogue here in Washington strengthens our democracy, period From the standpoint of the troops, I believe that they understand how our legislature works, and they understand that there's going to be this kind of debate."

Secretary Gates amplified this point:

"[O]ur troops do understand that everybody involved in this debate is looking to do the right thing for our country and for our troops, and that everybody is looking for the best way to avoid an outcome that leaves Iraq in chaos And I think they're sophisticated enough to understand that that's what the debate is really about And I think they understand that that debate's being carried on by patriotic people who care about them and care about their mission."

There is widespread consensus that the situation in Iraq is "grave and deteriorating." The recent National Intelligence Estimate on Iraq, the bipartisan Baker-Hamilton Iraq Study Group report, and countless military experts, both inside and outside the Pentagon, agree on this point. It is the constitutional duty of the U.S. House of Representatives to debate such weighty matters.

We applaud and appreciate your courageous leadership on behalf of our men and women who proudly wear the uniform of the United States and for your steadfast commitment to the national security of our nation.

Sincerely,



Robert G. Gard, Jr. (Lt. Gen., USA, Ret.)



Joseph P. Hoar (Gen. USMC, Ret.)